

Lyme School District
Emergency School Board Special Meeting
Monday, August 25, 2020
Electronic Meeting Via Zoom

approved w/ changes, 9/2/20

Board Members Present: Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden. Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson. Administrators: District Administrator Jeff Valence, Director of Academic Elise Foxall, Director of Special Services Miki McGee, Coordinator of Business Services Janet Mitchell, Facilities Director Doug Fillian. Public: 122 other attendees including staff and public. Recorded by Roger Lohr

1. Call to Order and Minutes Approval

Chair Jonathan Voegele called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM and cited the state right-to-know laws associated with emergency electronic meetings. He welcomed attendees and the agenda was reordered to consider the minutes of the previous meetings later in the agenda.

2. Public Comment

2A. Non-Staff Comments

Board member Yolanda Bujarski read public comments that had been received at the school district via email since the Board meeting that was held on August 17. There were statements of appreciation for the district Board, administration, and staff for the work on the Reopening Plan. Specifics were asked for consequences of family travel on students, half day kindergarten, and treatment of staff. There were comments about the low rate of COVID transmission in the Upper Valley and the hope that the community will act responsibly with regard to mitigation efforts.

There were 19 comments from the meeting's public attendees. A letter signed by 31 people in Lyme was sent to the district exclaiming a preference for a hybrid model to lower the daily number of people in the school building. Other comments were in favor of full opening and full day kindergarten because the hybrid model and "back and forth" from in person to remote were seen as very stressful. There was concern that home schooling was too costly and that the mitigation tactics in the building will be stressful for students. The VLACS program currently has no availability and more information was needed by parents about remote learning. There was an interest expressed for a robust remote learning program and a desire for more school support for remote learners. A statement felt that too many resources are going towards the in person model comparatively. One of the parent comments stated that the remote learning last spring was great for their student on an IEP.

It was stated that the situation remains dynamic and that a contingency plan was needed as research is showing that there has been a 90% increase in virus infection among the young. A concern was expressed that if the infection takes hold it will start and spread quickly. There was support for keeping the teachers safe. Some statements suggested that people in the community should be more flexible and not hold positions too dearly while respecting the diversity of perspectives. Synchronous learning was suggested with a webcam so remote learners could be aligned with class work. There was concern that students that are in and out of school should be able to align with the in person school work.

A letter was read by Chair Voegele regarding what was perceived as Board discourse and micromanagement.

2B. Staff Comments

A statement from the LEA was read by three Lyme teachers. The faculty has met and discussed the implementation plan and will delve deeper into it later this week. There was a statement about the lack of board cohesiveness and its impact on staff morale. The faculty recognized the need for flexibility and expectations will be different under the plan but the faculty is committed to have the best outcomes with the plan. Appreciation was expressed for support from the board, administrators, and the community.

There being no other public comments, the public comment period was closed by Chair Voegele at 8:48 PM. He stated that the implementation plan has been taken very seriously and while the board's split decision was acknowledged there is a common purpose and the district will move forward with a common spirit.

2C. Administrator and Board Comments

Superintendent Valence stated that the remote learning details will be covered in the board meeting and that many issues rely on the number of students and staff that will be in school and how the health mitigation efforts are expected to impact academics. The staff will meet this week to consider the specifics and a way to pivot will be developed. Many of the plans are untested and things will change when necessary. The staff will focus on the impact of the mitigation efforts on teaching and how it will impact the educational experience and emotional toll will be addressed. There is a hope for understanding and patience, and the support is greatly appreciated.

Board members expressed appreciation for the public participation in the process for developing a plan to reopen the school. The administration and staff were commended for the extensive work on the plan. There was a request for the LEA statement and a plea to address the call for remote learners' inclusion. It was recognized that August is stressful for teachers and that the emotions are polarizing but it was felt that the Lyme spirit will be overriding.

3. Business Requiring Discussion and/or Action

3A. Adoption of Lyme School Reopening Plan

A motion was made (Berk, Hayden) to adopt the Lyme School Reopening Plans for School Year 2020-2021 and the FAQ documents.

Discussion: It was expected that there would be revisions of the plan and the Board discussed whether it would need to approve changes. The plan would be subject to approval. Some of the health details will be updated and more clarity is needed on exclusions.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

3B. Para-Professionals

Superintendent Valence gave an overview of the staffing needs associated with the reopening plan including para professionals, technology, building/grounds and nurse. The need for 3 FTE would cover the supervisory needs of split classes projected at \$105,000. The state of New Hampshire has suspended Order # 38 which will allow the use of budget surplus from the preceding school year. The Lyme School surplus last year was \$364, 606 and this amount included transfers to the reserves and open purchase orders.

A motion was made (Greenway, Hayden) to approve hiring 3 FTE for para professionals at the Lyme School.

Discussion: The Board discussed keeping options open on these hirings in the case that the school is shutdown. It was acknowledged that it may be difficult to fill the positions, which are supervisory but the staff has confirmed it is committed and adaptable with the situation.

There is a tally of COVID-related expenses and currently the total is \$42,779 but that amount does not include personnel yet. The B & G custodian has not been officially approved by the Board yet. It was expected that one of the para professionals can be covered with IDEA B grant funds.

The town Budget Committee meets in September and the impact of state deficit and possible downshifting costs to towns is uncertain. It was felt that if the district has to switch to full remote learning that there could be some budget savings. It was stated that much of last year's surplus was due to savings on high school tuition.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

3C. Health Screening

The Board heard about the plan to screen students at different locations in town to avoid congregation at the school entrance. The Nurse Committee has discussed the student and staff screening, nurse office issues, and adding nurse staff support. The Board heard about the decision regarding paying screeners rather than asking them to volunteer.

A motion was made (Berk, Hayden) to approve hiring as many as 8 positions for health screening at \$20 per hour.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

3D. Building and Grounds Hiring

A motion was made (Wilson, Hayden) to approve the hiring of Keith Waterman as a custodian replacement for up to 11 weeks.

Discussion: The Board was informed that a 1.5 FTE custodian would be \$83,829; a 1.0 FTE custodian would be \$55,662; a 0.5 FTE custodian would be \$28,166 including benefits and taxes. The daily school sanitation work was estimated to take 7 hours for 35 rooms not including the cafeteria, offices, gym or common areas.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

A motion was made (Hayden, Barta) to approve hiring to fill a 1.5 FTE Building and Grounds position at up to \$85,000.

Discussion: The Board discussed options for the position that might be contracted for less than a school year. One of the sanitation options includes looking into using a contract service.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

3E. Nurse Position

A motion was made (Bujarski, Berk) to approve hiring to fill a 1.0 FTE nurse position at up to \$85,860.

Discussion: The Board discussed options for the position.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

4. Kindergarten

A motion was made (Wilson, Greenway) to reinstate full day kindergarten for the 2020-2021 school year at Lyme School.

Discussion: A case was made about the half day kindergarten option related to the COVID period. The purpose of the idea was to give parents a half day option. The half day concept was intended to make the kindergarten situation easier for the students and to offer the parents an alternative for fewer hours considering the COVID threat. Three emails were received from families with kindergarteners and concern was expressed at the on-the-spot nature of the survey and decision. The kindergarten teacher, who developed the concept was not at the Board meeting to explain further. There was a question about the impact of half day kindergarten on enrollment statistics associated with state-provided revenue to the school district. While the Board considered it could discuss the issue at the next Board meeting, the start of school was approaching and it was felt that the teacher, administrator and parents could work out the kindergarten options among themselves. Superintendent Valence offered to share the kindergarten survey results with Board members Wilson and Greenway. On behalf of the teachers, Steve Dayno expressed the social aspect of kindergarteners and that parents could be given an option on the matter.

A motion was made and seconded (Hayden, Barta) to table the motion to reinstate full day kindergarten at Lyme School.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele voting in favor, and Barbara Wilson opposed.

5. Remote Learning

Superintendent Valence explained that some teacher assignments are changing and this will impact what will be offered at the Lyme School during COVID. It is expected the frequency of specials, tier two reading and math instruction, and special education case loads will be impacted. There will be three teachers working with the remote learning program. A remote learning program for kindergarten has not been decided yet. There are details about the remote learning program in the Reopening Plan on the school website and more will be finalized during the staff meetings later this week.

A motion was made and seconded (Hayden, Berk) to approve assignment changes for remote learning as outlined at the Lyme School Board meeting held on August 25, 2020.

Discussion: It was expected that remote learners and in person learners will commit to staying with their respective choice through the first quarter. If the number of remote learners is significant, the district can consider a broader remote learning plan. There may be a need to increase para professionals for IEPs and the Board will be informed if this is necessary. There will be efforts made to keep remote learners aligned with classroom work. Grades 5-8 will have webcams so that remote learners can follow the class and participate with their respective classes and teachers.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

6. Nurse Committee Report

Kati Miller spoke about testing options saying that a list of test locations will be posted on the school website. There is no plan for surveillance testing at the school as the testing will be associated with

known exposure. There is no saliva test available here and there is a Medicaid option for those who are uninsured.

The existing plan is moving forward to transform the teacher lounge into a second isolation area. A list of supplies that are needed for the area will be forwarded to administrators. Face shields will be available for teachers but not for many students. The remote student screening sites are still being finalized. Classroom configurations for each grade cohort are being finalized and there will be assigned seating for contact tracing.

A one-page document will be prepared for teachers including topics such as facing forward desks, small group learning, hand hygiene, instructional and health practices, etc. Signs will be displayed at the restroom entries.

The Board discussed staff and visitor screening asking if there was equity to screen students but to allow the staff to self-screen. The small group learning could come within the Board's three-to-six foot distance guideline. These items will be on the Nurse Committee agenda.

7. Facility Update

It is expected to be about three weeks for the school to receive the enhanced air filters that were ordered. An air flow quality assessment will be conducted at the school. The Board had an update on school modifications that have been ongoing during the summer. Superintendent Valence expressed appreciation to Doug Fillian for his work since recently starting with Building and Grounds at Lyme School. The HVAC upgrade estimate was \$16,000 to upgrade and optimize the school system and it included \$7,000 for non-COVID aspects.

8. Minutes Approval

A motion was made and seconded (Hayden, Wilson) to approve the Lyme School Board meeting minutes for August 17, 2020 as submitted.

Discussion: The Board discussed whether a reference about half day kindergarten would include a repeated half day in the afternoon. It was decided that there is some repetition within the kindergarten day under normal circumstances and it was expected that the kindergarten program will be finalized among the teacher, administrator, and parents.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

A motion was made and seconded (Hayden, Wilson) to approve the Lyme School Board non-public meeting minutes for August 17, 2020 as submitted.

The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor.

9. Next Meeting

The Board discussed the next meeting and a decision will be made after a doodle to be held later next week.

10. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded (Hayden, Beck). The motion was passed with Phil Barta, Vince Berk, Yolanda Bujarski, Hayes Greenway, Matthew Hayden, Jonathan Voegele, Barbara Wilson voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM.

